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ABSTRACT

An American visiting a Mexican secundaria (equivalent to the U.S. junior high school) noted the strong presence of discourses on "adolescence." This prompted an ideological and historical review of the secundaria since its development in the postrevolutionary ethos of the 1920s-30s. Inspired by a U.S. model of adolescent education in the liberal mold, the development of the secundaria was subject to the ideological swings of postrevolutionary regimes and incorporated contradictory themes. The goal was to accommodate students' "individual differences" and promote social mobility while still subordinating individual interests to the imperatives of national solidarity, equality, and collectivism. Designed early on to integrate the adolescent into community life, by the 1980s the secundaria had become an important step in the path to professional studies for nearly half of all Mexican students. Secundaria enrollment faltered during the economic crisis of the 1980s. In 1993, the change to mandatory secondary education was accompanied by a shift toward individual autonomy and freedom of choice in pursuing career options. Today, the informal economy offers a more viable and immediate source of income to many Mexican youth. Unless the State can commit enough resources to make secondary education a realistic option, the system will continue to experience a crisis of enrollment. Moreover, since Mexicans across social classes think of adulthood in terms of responsibility to a functioning social unit, the increased emphasis on individual options over social commitment may drive a cultural wedge between families and their communities. (Contains 60 references.) (TD)

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"...Una Etapa Siempre Difícil": Concepts of Adolescence and Programs of Secondary Education in Mexico

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Since 1988, and for a full year from 1990-1991, I have conducted formal and informal fieldwork at a provincial Mexican *secundaria*.[1] Located in a regional city of some 50,000 inhabitants, Escuela Secundaria Federal (ESF) serves a full gamut of local social classes and groups, including some of the members of one of Mexico's most populous indigenous zones.[2]

From the outset of my research, I was struck by the use of the term "adolescence." Teachers and parents wielded the phrase frequently to explain the behavior of their charges, or to exhort students to a certain standard of conduct. It was not unusual to hear parents complain about their "adolescents" at meetings with teachers, or to hear teachers respond with suggestions for discipline in the home. A parent at one meeting referred to what the "doctors"say about adolescence, thus medicalizing the matter. In an interview, the school's principal admitted that the school did not have sufficient resources to deal with the "special problems" of adolescents (doctors, social workers, vocational counselors), even though the secundaria was specifically designed for such duty. And in one discussion, a parent expressed an oft-heard adult sentiment when she characterized adolescence as "*una etapa siempre dificil*." (always a difficult phase).

Not all was storm and stress, however. Coexisting with this rather dire portrait of adolescence was a praiseful one. Teachers often portrayed the adolescent years as the happiest and most carefree the students were likely to encounter, and they often identified this period with the years of secondary study. In one classroom session toward the end of the year, a teacher told his group of soon-to-graduate students:

> ...So I have seen how you all have changed, from childhood to adolescence, a very beautiful change...but kids, when you enter the *preparatoria* you're going to see that the *secundaria* was unique...because over there in the *preparatoria* things are very different, there's no longer the same conviviality (*convivencia*) in the group, the students don't get to know each other as well. (Fieldnotes, 873)

This was only one of many occasions where I witnessed a teacher prompting a kind of future nostalgia. As in this case, teachers extolled the virtues of group solidarity and *convivencia*. Teachers also suggested that the adolescent years were relatively carefree. Kids could still feel free to be kids, to have fun with abandon, to postpone the more serious decisions about life and career. All this would end when they graduated from the *secundaria*. It was as if a summer of inevitable fate would suddenly transform these adolescents into "youth" (*juventud*).

Most striking of all was the way the students took up the discourse of adolescence themselves. Having heard the term so often, they used it to explain or justify their own behavior, or to understand it retrospectively. Rosita was actually reading a book on

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[1] The secundaria corresponds roughly to the U.S. "junior high school," and covers the three years immediately following the six years of primary school. Students typically enter at the age of 12 and graduate at the age of 15.

[2] See Levinson (1993, 1996) for fuller descriptions of the research site and results.

"adolescents" when I stopped by to visit her house one day. She said she wanted to learn more from the "experts" about what she was going through. On another occasion, Leticia and her friends asked me what I would do if I were an "adolescent" at school that day. And students also equated adolescence with their years in the *secundaria*. In an informal interview toward the end of the school year, Iván and Hector concurred that the transition they would make to the *preparatoria* was a momentous one:

> *Iván*: ...In the prepa one passes on from being an adolescent to a youth (*joven*) who should be responsible in his way of being, his way of doing things for himself. One has to be more responsible in studying, and to be serious with the girls, not just to be thinking about nothing but sex, but to seriously conduct a nice friendship...
>
> *Hector*: ...Because in the prepa it's already about having a little more responsibility...the "federal" (ESF) is like a, how should I say it?, like a little review, something to teach yourself, but in the prepa it really depends on you...Here (at ESF) one is still small and over there in the prepa one gets more savvy (*agarra más mentalidad*)... (A2-3, 11/6/91, 7)

These are just a few examples of many. Students clearly captured the filtering of "expert" discourses through parents, teachers, and the popular media and applied them to the understanding of their own experience.

What I have heard over the last ten years finds echo in the historical literature on Mexican secondary education. The secundaria in Mexico, as we shall see, was created in 1923 to accommodate the "adolescent" lifestage in Mexican society. The model was largely imported from North America, but it was given unique meanings and functions in the Mexican context. For nearly seventy years, the secundaria served as an optional continuation of "basic" studies. For fifty of those years, most Mexican students sought only to complete the six years of primary education. Typically, only those who envisioned a professional career continued beyond primary school, and typically they used the secundaria as a stepping stone to further studies in urban areas. By the 1970s, however, secundaria enrollments increased, and it was not uncommon to find students terminating their studies after completing this level. Among other things, the increased accessibility of these schools and a labor market grown accustomed to workers with secondary-level education contributed to the popularity of secondary studies.

Still, it was not until 1993 that the Mexican Constitution was modified to mandate compulsory secondary schooling. This was an unprecedented political move. Though the Secretariat of Public Education had made great strides in providing communities with various options for secondary schooling,[3] few would have suggested that the provision of secondary schooling might cover the entire population of school-age youth. Indeed, even primary schools were still often overcrowded or, in the case of the most remote rural communities, nonexistent. Moreover, few resources existed which might allow an

[3] In 1993, some 60% of secondary students were enrolled in "general" secundarias, 28% were enrolled in "technical" secundarias, and another 12% were enrolled in telesecundarias, a form of distance education offered to smaller rural communities (SEP 1993:10).

enforcement of the compulsory rule, and anyway, after ten years of economic crisis, many families were in no condition to support their children's studies. Most observers agreed, then, that the Constitutional amendment was primarily symbolic, meant to signal Mexico's commitment to more and advanced "modern" education for the further economic development of the country.[4]

The mere gesture of making secundaria attendance compulsory is likely to have interesting effects on local perceptions of educational opportunity and parental responsibility. If the school for the "adolescent stage" was always just an option, what does it mean now that parents must consider delivering their children to the school an obligation to the State? More important, perhaps, than the compulsory rule are the curricular changes imposed by the plan for educational modernization, put into effect in 1993. What kinds of effects, if any, will these changes have on the role of the secundaria in society? Does the new program of studies still highlight the "integral formation" of the Mexican adolescent, as the older documents announced? How does it plan on going about this? And will the new generation of secundaria students still learn to understand themselves as "adolescents" attending a school designed for this "difficult stage" of their lives?

Not all of these questions, of course, can be fully answered without further fieldwork at ESF and a variety of other Mexican secundarias. I have not conducted systematic inquiry at ESF since the new reforms went into effect. Still, given the relative paucity of research into Mexican secondary education,[5] it would be fruitful to begin answering some of these questions through an inquiry that both extends into the past and projects into the future. My purpose in this paper, then, is to examine the connections, historical and contemporary, between the Mexican secondary school, the broader ideological and political-economic context of Mexican educational development, and concepts of "adolescence" in expert and popular discourse.[6] After moving through the historical presentation, I return to the present moment to examine, once again, the multiple purposes and functions, often contradictory, that have come together in the secundaria around "forming adolescents." I analyze the latest program of studies and speculate about the kinds of effects it might have.

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[4] The new "Plan and Program of Secondary Studies", published in 1993, suggested that "it has not been until recently that the development of the educational system has made it possible for nine years of schooling to be a genuine opportunity for the majority of the population and not just a goal consecrated by the law." (SEP 1993: 10). Many would say, of course, that the "majority" now potentially served by the secundaria is not as overwhelming as this document would have it.

[5] Ducoing and Landesmann (1996), in their review of educational research conducted during the 1980s, note that fewer studies have been done of the secundaria than any other educational level in Mexico. And Sandoval (1997) notes that secondary teachers are often given the same kinds of training and "*propuestas educativas*" (educational mandates) as the primary teacher, without consideration for his or her "*especificidad profesional*" (specific professional appointment). Among the few contemporary studies of the secundaria that have been done in Mexico are those by Quiroz (1987, 1991, 1992), Azuela de la Cueva (1989), Emmerich (1990), Mir (1979), Gallegos et al. (1988), and Sandoval (1996).

[6] For an illuminating approach to the study of how "expert" theories become incorporated into popular, everyday cognitive schemes, see Linde (1987).

Citizenship or Human Capital: Ideological Contradictions of Educational Philosophy and Organizing Ideology in Mexico

Carlos Ornelas seconds the observations of many contemporary educational scholars in describing the fundamentally "paradoxical" character of the Mexican educational system: its two primary mandates are to "form citizens" and form "human capital." (Ornelas 1995:49). These mandates imply rather different kinds of educational priorities, and not surprisingly, they have resulted in a series of confusing and often contradictory initiatives in educational policy.[7] As we shall see, the history of the Mexican secundaria clearly shows the imprint of such contradictory goals. But it is also important to look behind and beyond these stated educational goals to "deeper" ideologies which sustain relations of power within Mexican society. Only if we examine these more pervasive ideologies will we fully understand the distinctiveness of the Mexican situation underlying those contradictions which would otherwise appear to put Mexico in rather common company.

In Mexico I believe we can identify three distinct, and at turns contradictory, cultural formations, which have tugged and pulled at one another throughout the modern period. One I would call, following Lomnitz et al (1993), the "hierarchical holism" of the Mexican political body: traceable to the neo-Tomist Spanish state, but represented perhaps best by the "Conservative" tradition of the nineteenth century, a notion of organic hierarchy, proper relations of authority rooted ultimately in ecclesiastical, and patriarchal, imperatives. The other would be the "Liberal" tradition of private property, individual initiative, rational prgress, and formal equality before the law. The third, in effect a kind of uneasy synthesis of the former two, would be the tradition and practice of revolutionary nationalism, with its emphasis on collective solidarity.[8] And one place where an observer can see the assertion of revolutionary nationalism rather clearly is in the structure and ideology of the national education system.

Clearly, an ideology of equality has suffused educational practice in Mexico. However, this ideology still betrays the trappings of "hierarchical holism." On the one hand, Mexico has inherited from the liberal European tradition conceptions of individual equality, rationality, and mobility which accompanied the expansion of capitalist relations. These conceptions dictate that schooling should "free" people from superstition and vice, and give them equal opportunities to prepare themselves to enter into the "productive" sphere of society. These conceptions also stipulate that schooling should be a key instrument of meritocracy--a fair, equitable means of selecting the best people, based on their intrinsic qualities, for the best positions within a technical division of labor. The liberal discourse on education thus individualizes citizens on a presumably

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[7] Work by McGinn and Street (1982, 1984), and Morales-Gomez and Torres (1990), would suggest that even these two contradictory emphases aren't really what drives policy formation. The political sociology of policy formation in Mexico provides evidence that the building of "political capital" by educational bureaucrats and the concern with state legitimation really drive the development of educational policy.

[8] Lomnitz et al. (1993) suggest that the postrevolutionary period has in fact been characterized by a "series of accommodations" between these two prior cultural formations (or ideologies), but I prefer, at risk of reification, to call this a distinct, albeit hybrid, tradition.

level playing field of equal opportunities. Citizens are "equal" in that they share the same, very basic qualities of humanity, such as the capacity for relexive thought and moral action. Hierarchy is only reinscribed within this egalitarian ideology as a sense of legitimate stratification, the "natural" outcome of natural differences in ability filtered through an effective meritocracy. In this version, equality refers to both a desired condition of society, and a "method" of political, economic, and social enfranchisement. It does not posit that individuals, or even aggregate groups, must be equal, or the "same," in their intrinsic qualities, but it does posit that they compete as individuals within the same social space, on the same level playing field. It is in this sense, at least partially, that Corrigan and Sayer (1985) speak of the "individualizing" tendencies of the State. The Mexican State has appropriated this discourse to represent itself as an active agent in social levelling, demolishing the hierarchical and unjust structures which had governed pre-revolutionary Mexico. The ideology of equality thus serves to encourage misrecognition of structural inequalities which either continue or emerge after the revolutionary period.

Yet the discourse on equality has also been articulated to a particular construction of revolutionary nationalism, directed and propagated by the State. In this discourse, equality of persons and groups (unions, ejidos, political parties, neighborhood associations, and so on) defines the space of national identity. Despite particular allegiances and identities, persons and groups are all "equal" as Mexicans. The State attempts to construct an inclusive Mexicanness, which does posit this quality as intrinsic to persons and groups. It is in this sense that state formation "totalizes" a polity (Corrigan and Sayer 1985). It is also in this sense that a kind of "hierarchical holism" continues to assert itself in Mexico.

Mexican schools, like virtually all other public school systems in the modern era, have been structured, in part, around the selective principle of liberal education. Practices of examination and selection have historically individualized educational strategies in Mexico as elsewhere. Most of the forms of Mexican educational practice structured by these liberal conceptions were already in place, in one form or another, by the end of the last century, when the Liberal hegemony in Mexico had been consolidated. It was not until the outset of this century, with the explosion of social revolution in Mexico, that new forms of educational ideology and practice were grafted on to the liberal base. A new emphasis on cooperation, solidarity, and the collective good, oriented toward the construction of a national identity and national culture, took its place alongside the liberal model of individualism. This new emphasis drew on already existing practices and discourses of solidarity in popular and indigenous cultures, articulating their local, community-oriented focus to a hegemonic national project.

The "uniquely Mexican" construction of nationalism to which I have already referred involves a basic contradiction between individualism and collectivism. Unlike the Australian egalitarian nationalism discussed by Kapferer, in which the individual is the "fundamental unit of value" (1988:14), Mexican revolutionary nationalism does not just "totalize" a number of "equal" individuals (although it does this too); it also constructs communities of allegiance (based on class, ethnicity, or locality/community). We might say that Mexico's egalitarianism attempts to "equate" (in the sense of identity, or sameness) communities and classes within the space of nationhood. Moreover, unlike

Australian nationalism, which posits a sharp distinction between the State and the nation, Mexican nationalism, through complex cultural processes of postrevolutionary regime legitimation, has come to be identified with the State itself. It is only in this sense that Mexico appears closer to the Sri Lankan case Kapferer discusses (1988:6-7), while still being situated within the Western egalitarian tradition.

Thus, Mexican revolutionary nationalism and educational ideology share many of the features of the kinds of nationalist ideologies which have emerged in the European liberal democracies. However, these features have been differently articulated in a uniquely Mexican formation, often in contradictory fashion. One of my primary concerns is to show how this contradictory articulation of ideologies of equality and nationhood provides an important referent for ethnographically observable contradictions between practice and discourse in the educational arena (see Rockwell 1987b:55).

So why is the Mexican secundaria important in all of this? I would suggest that the secundaria is important for several reasons, not least of which is that it corresponds to a crucial moment of identity formation in the human life cycle. Moreover, one of the main points which typically distinguishes the secundaria from the primaria is its generally greater mixing of social classes and ethnicities.[9] By and large, primary schools are much more homogeneous in class and ethnic terms. They tend to serve more uniform neighborhoods and communities. Thus, the ideology of equality--fundamental to the "basic" educational cycle in Mexico--is likely to get "activated" even more strongly in the secundaria, where the social differences which the discourse implicitly attempts to incorporate are more salient and deeply rooted. But most importantly for the line of inquiry I am pursuing here, the secundaria seems to have enshrined the contradiction between liberal individualism and nationalist collectivism in the very structure and rationale of its curriculum. In order to appreciate the full meaning of this curriculum, we must situate the historical development of the Mexican secundaria in the context of the "basic education" cycle in Mexico.

Historical Contextualization of the Mexican Secundaria

It has become by now a commonplace observation in the educational literature that mass public schooling, which emerged in the West in the mid to late nineteenth century, was designed historically to serve an integrative function in the modern, especially capitalist, nation-state (Karabel and Halsey 1977). Whatever its other flaws, a Durkheimian perspective on the moral basis of national educational systems seems to account for a number of their features, especially during the 19th century process of European capitalist expansion and nation-building (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:5, 196). The expansion of capitalist relations of production oriented public education increasingly toward the provision of industrial labor power, the disciplining or moral "uplift" of marginal classes, and the maintenance, justification, and "rationalization" of class inequalities through a rhetoric of individual mobility. Public education also came to play

[9] Secundarias in larger urban centers and smaller towns may tend toward greater homogeneity, but always less still than the primarias which respectively feed into them.

an important role in the legitimation of nationally identified elites to preside over the entire process. Thus, education came to be invested with technical and "political", as well as moral-integrative functions.

Historians of Mexican education have astutely traced the development of a liberal, lay, nationalist schooling agenda since the time of Independence (Vázquez de Knauth 1970; Robles 1977; Vaughan 1982). While there were some early attempts at creating public schools in the independent State, it was not until the Liberal reform period of 1856-67 that public schooling received serious attention as a potential tool for national development. It was during this time that the discursive foundations of egalitarian individualism came to be articulated, especially in the thought of Gabino Barreda. While the philosophical positivism of Barreda expressed his own elite class outlook (Zea 1974), his rationale for universal, obligatory schooling was still premised on equality. For Barreda, all Mexicans, regardless of social class, required and deserved the moral and technical benefits of universal schooling. These benefits would also redound to the national good, as the general moral and productive level of society improved. Though Barreda's vision of society was still distinctly hierarchical, it nevertheless inscribed this hierarchy in an egalitarian vision of "natural" aptitudes. If all weren't equally destined for the top, they were at least equally capable of being educated.

Despite the implicitly egalitarian premises of liberal positivism, throughout the period of the Porfirian dictatorship (1886-1910) leading up to the Mexican Revolution, public schooling was extended primarily to the urban middle classes. Justo Sierra and the positivists in charge of the Secretariat of Public Instruction tried to push for universal obligatory schooling. They argued against the Social Darwinists and other racists who rejected public education as an equalizing force. Sierra and his colleagues advocated, above all, a strong state role in creating a practical type of education oriented to development, modernization, and "moralization." As Vaughan (1982:23-38) argues, Porfirian educational philosophies were shot through with their own contradictions, since they attempted to instill national pride while bowing to the shibboleths of European "progress." In any case, during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz the material resources which might have made such philosophies realizable in practice were never really channeled into education. It would take the explosion of popular demands ignited by the Revolution to prompt national elites--this time in the shape of the postrevolutionary State--to begin forging a truly popular, mass-based school system with nationalist pretensions. Yet many of the conceptual foundations for such a project were already in place.[10]

Despite the changes the Revolution brought, there has been a great deal of debate about whether schooling in postrevolutionary Mexico differed all that much from the pre-revolutionary years. Based on a historical analysis of educational programs, policies, and discourses, Vaughan (1982), for instance, concluded that the basic rationale for schooling in Mexico changed little after the Revolution. Much as it had been during the Reform

[10] Bartra (1992:5) notes that "the modern conception of the Mexican spirit, the `new man' that the Revolution required, does not arise in a sudden outburst of nationalism. In fact, many of the features of the Mexican character are described, exalted, and criticized by the positivist liberal intellectuals of the beginning of the twentieth century."

and Porfirian periods, education was still oriented toward national unity, political stability, development and productivity, and the "moral" elevation of the masses by dispelling tradition and superstition (Vaughan 1982:84-5). Vaughan's analysis, similar to Hamilton's (1982) for the question of the State more generally, emphasizes the grounding of educational policy in capitalist imperatives. Thus, despite the ideological changes wrought by the Revolution, the fundamentally capitalist path of development pursued both before and after the Revolution dictated continuity in educational plans.

While there is certainly more than a grain of truth in Vaughan's thesis, it misses a good deal of what happened in the educational field after the Revolution. For if the Revolution ultimately reinstated the hegemony of capitalist relations, it did so under radically changed social conditions. The Revolution unleashed popular democratic and millenarian impulses--in a word, popular demands--which could not be easily accommodated by comfortable bourgeois rule. Though individualism and equality had always been at the foundations of liberal, nationalist education, the Revolution seemed to require the articulation of a new, specifically revolutionary nationalism which could incorporate the sensibilities of all the popular classes that had participated. Now more than ever it was necessary for the State to attend to the great range of class, ethnic, and regional differences which divided the nation, and of course schooling was an obvious choice for accomplishing this feat of national integration. If the principles of nationalism and equality had in fact informed previous epochs of state-formation and educational ideology, education had still remained a largely elite preoccupation, divorced from the problems posed by significant social difference--by the rural, indigenous, or working-class "other." With the Revolution, the first material bases for a truly mass, popular public schooling were established, and the question of equality and social difference once again moved to the forefront.

The Revolution had activated popular demands for universal educational opportunities. However, there was no simple correspondence between such demands and the educational programs the State would eventually propose. Indeed, postrevolutionary educational developments embodied the contradictions of a modernizing, capitalist state trapped by the rhetoric and commitments wrought by revolution. The populist solution attempted to balance the heterogeneity of popular demands with the need for strong, centralized control. In this manner, schools expanded to provide educational services and opportunities to previously marginalized classes and communities, yet they did so largely on the terms set by the State. Often, community demands for schools did not meet with the kinds of education they had sought. There was a constant, and not always pacific, negotiation of popular demands, or "rights,"[11] as the State sought to define its relationship to various communities and constituencies. The role of the teacher in this negotiation was essential.

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[11] Mercado (1985), in her excellent ethnography of a rural elementary school, argues that one of the key ways the postrevolutionary State constitutes and legitimates itself is by transforming the popular claims and demands of the Revolution into rights. Subsequently, the State must assume the social obligations which ensue from these rights as a condition for assuring a legitimacy-sustaining consensus.

What were some of the key features of education in the postrevolutionary period? Fuentes (1983:26) has called attention to the important development of administrative centralization, which emerged as an alternative to decentralized, community control:

> In 1921, when the energetic group that triumphed in the Revolution assigned to the new State the task of national and popular education, [they] abandoned the liberal notion, favored by Carranza, of an educational apparatus not centrally controlled, but distributed between local forces and open to the action of private agencies. Instead, they adopted the model of a strong and expansive state, able to penetrate into every corner of social life, interested in promoting a new kind of lay morality which would associate the past and the future, integrate social classes, and dissolve their conflicts in the shared values of progress and national destiny. (my translation)

Significantly, Fuentes observes the link between this model of educational centralization and the goal of a nation-oriented equality. Only through the agency of a "strong and expansive state" could Mexican educators hope to overcome sharp social divisions and forge a modern nation.[12] And this strong state, of course, also found itself nourished by the everpresent ideological power of hierarchical holism.

In 1921, soon after the definitive triumph of the Revolution, President Alvaro Obregón brought José Vasconcelos to Mexico City to act as founding head of a new federal Secretariat of Public Education. Vasconcelos elaborated both the practical plans and the nationalist justification for an aggressive federalization of popular education. He articulated a vision of revolutionary cultural action which, for perhaps the first time in the country's independence, explicitly valorized the contributions of "popular" and "indigenous" culture.[13] Yet, perhaps paradoxically, he also laid the groundwork for a system of schooling which would be oriented toward homogenizing the customs and values of all Mexicans in the service of two predominant statist imperatives: national unity, and the material and spiritual redemption, or "elevation," of popular classes (Taboada 1985:45-6).[14]

Taboada (1985), Raby (1987) and others have all called attention to the manner in which postrevolutionary schooling was invested with the task of creating, or in some cases reinforcing, a unified national identity. The regional and local identifications which had inspired diverse revolutionary movements constantly threatened the integrity of the

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[12] González Chávez (1987, 1988) documents the displacement of widespread and popular "local education committees," which linked the interests of municipalities and state governments, by the development of centralized federal education after the Revolution.

[13] Many have pointed out further ironies in Vasconcelos' "revolutionary" policies. Though he laid the foundations for popular, especially rural, education, Vasconcelos' own cultural and educational activities were more oriented toward the city-based elites. Eventually, the perceived elitism of Vasconcelos' activities produced a split between his followers and those teachers more engaged with the prospects of radical transformation in the countryside.

[14] Taboada (1985:45) quotes a short speech by revolutionary President Obregón, reprinted in the journal, *El Maestro: Revista de Cultura Nacional* (1921), in which he says the prime goal of education will be to liberate the people (*pueblo*) "from archaic prejudices and give them a more advanced position, one more propitious for greater harmony and greater national equity."

postrevolutionary State. In effect, the penetration of state-sponsored schooling into previously neglected local communities represented an attempt to link such communities to the State and thus consolidate the hegemonic rule of revolutionary elites (Raby 1987:308; Córdova 1984; Taboada 1985:54). Interestingly, what occurred during this period was also an attempt to identify the nation in cultural terms with the specific dominant groups comprising the State. It was in this manner that a specious concept of equality, oriented toward the cultural homogenization implicit in the concept of the patriarchal mestizo nation (O'Malley 1986), served to underwrite the dominance of a particular ruling class. The concept of equality, in this context, did not necessarily hold out the promise of social mobility; rather, it was used to construct a particular cultural space of identification, of "national unity," which might smooth the consolidation of hegemonic rule and the path of capitalist development.[15] Even the language of the Constitutional article specifying the goals of the educational system sketched the relationship between equality and national identity:

> (Education) should tend to create and affirm in students concepts and feelings of solidarity and the preeminence of collective interests over private or individual interests, with the goal of lessening social and economic inequalities ...Through instruction and school activities, (education) will contribute to the development and consolidation of national unity, thereby excluding all political, social, and sectarian influences contrary or inimical to the country, and affirming in students the love of country (patria) and national traditions...Special attention will be given to the study of the country's economy, environment, and social conditions in order to achieve the most equitable use of its natural resources.[16]

Indeed, if a "new Mexican" was created in revolutionary discourses on equality, it was a cultural subject (Bartra 1992) oriented toward the collective, e.g. the national, good.

The development of federal schooling, especially in rural areas, could succeed because it at least responded to a number of popular demands. The idea of rural schools as *casas del pueblo* (house of the people), first conceived by Vasconcelos and then elaborated by the great educator Moises Sáenz, was received enthusiastically in many villages. The model of the rural school had been influenced by the active, participatory

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[15] Epstein (1985:57-61) has argued even more forcefully that the Mexican focus on national identity and unity in education specifically attempts to counteract the sense of degradation, of dispossession, produced by extreme social inequalities. Since an awareness of large socio-economic disparities is likely to render national identity more fragile, public education is committed, at least discursively, to promoting equality. This equality is linked with the goals of civic participation and national solidarity. Epstein's observations fit well with my own argument, for it is in this sense that the discursive formation of national identity attempts to produce a mediation, even a misrecognition, of the actually existing, material structures of inequality.

[16] This is my translation of sections from page 129 of the *Ley Orgánica de la Educación Pública* from 1941, as reproduced in Campos de García (1973:42-3). This law is an elaboration of the 3rd Constitutional Article of 1917, which stipulates that education in Mexico will be secular, gratis, and compulsory through primary school. The 1917 Constitution, which was hammered out even before revolutionary hostilities had ceased, and which remains the operative national law in Mexico, retained much of the original Liberal Constitution of 1857.

pedagogy in the philosophy of John Dewey, with whom Sáenz had studied at Columbia. Rural schoolteachers were much more than instructors of literacy and mathematics. Rather, teachers were conceived as moral, social, and technical apostles, guiding their communities to practical and spiritual liberation--and integration into national life. Many of the specific skills, techniques, and knowledges imparted by rural schoolteachers came to have a lasting and valued effect in community practice. Many teachers left behind quite tangible material and economic improvements. In addition to the schools themselves, "cultural missions" were created at strategic locations in rural parts of the country. The missions were intended to serve as resource centers for teachers and other interested citizens, who could consult materials and advanced teachers at the centers in order to more effectively teach villagers the latest skills. The intense cultural action of the revolutionary State was thus "double edged." Communities might have wished for material improvements without the corresponding allegiance to the State this entailed. And though the plans for rural education were filled with pronouncements about community empowerment, participation, and self-direction, the city-based revolutionary pedagogues often could not see beyond their own paternalistic prerogatives. Thus, while education responded to rural needs and demands, it also deepened the power of state rule.[17]

The postrevolutionary State clearly used a logic of incorporation to articulate regional, class, and ethnic differences into a common national project. As I have said, women were rarely a consideration in this formula of rule, for they did not constitute a group which threatened the tenuous reach of national identifications. Ethnicity, on the other hand, posed a perennial problem for state rule. As Knight (1990:84) points out,

> Between 1910 and 1920 the chaos of civil war had shattered the State and reduced Mexico to a patchwork of warring factions...The task of creating a viable, coherent nation--a nation that was more than a mere "geographical expression"--was never more daunting...As for Mexico's Indians, they constituted a major challenge to the nationalist project. For them, the nation-state was, at best, a source of fiscal and other demands; they owed it no loyalty.

In the words of leading postrevolutionary intellectual Alfonso Caso, Mexico's Indians lacked "the essential sentiment of the citizen, that political solidarity which is the very base on which the principle of nationality rests" (quoted in Knight 1990:84).

Mexico's indigenous population, moreover, had always represented the great internal "other" in the dominant national imaginary, and indigenous communities generally remained outside the ambit of national culture. Despite the nineteenth century liberal drive to break up autonomous Indian communities, until the Revolution those wielding power in Mexico were generally content to allow such communities to inhabit the margins of the nation, as it were. However, the ideology of the Revolution spawned a self-conscious attempt to valorize the Indian component of Mexican nationality.

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[17] Elsie Rockwell's (1994, 1996) work on primary schools in a rural region of Mexico brilliantly demonstrates the interplay of local and national interests, and shows how the teaching experience was often transformative for local educators themselves.

Moreover, the *indigenista* movement which emerged out of the Revolution explicitly sought to incorporate indigenous groups into the fabric of national life.

The most radical strain of *indigenismo*, represented best by the Columbia-trained anthropologist Manuel Gamio, sought to fully incorporate native groups into national life through an intensive program of Spanish language, history, and civics instruction. Gamio's appraisal of indigenous life was unrelentingly negative. He viewed them as living in abject poverty (which was true) and with an extremely low level of cultural development (which was patently ethnocentric).

Moises Sáenz, who as I already mentioned became subsecretary of education under Vasconcelos, initially embraced the negative evolutionism of Gamio. His earliest essays from the 1920s were frankly evolutionist, claiming the need for an educational practice which would recognize that, "in the face of the primitive Indian, the (school's) task is fundamentally acculturative; in the peasant village the process has to be one of cultural diffusion, that is, the generalization of information and concepts, of habits and customs, until there reigns in Mexico one satisfactorily homogeneous way of life" (Sáenz 1970:42). In later years, however, Sáenz would modify his incorporationist stance. His experience in the Indian village of Carapán, where residents seldom sent their children to the recently introduced school and claimed to be perfectly satisfied with their way of life, convinced him that the rural, indigenous school should respect indigenous culture while attempting to improve its material conditions. Thus, Sáenz became an "integrationist" rather than an incorporationist (Hewitt de Alcántara 1988:33-4). In the late 1930s, during the regime of Cárdenas, he began to articulate an argument for a limited cultural pluralism which would acknowledge the cultural values and contributions of indigenous communities while still espousing the goals of national integration.

From the straightforwardly incorporationist logic of the immediate postrevolutionary period, the Mexican State moved in the 1930s toward a conception of socialist education which generated a number of sharp conflicts, especially in the countryside. While the nationalist education of Vasconcelos and Sáenz had defined "morality" largely in terms of individual productivity, patriotism, cooperation, and acceptance of subordinate roles in a socioeconomic hierarchy (Vaughan 1982:174), socialist education under President Lázaro Cárdenas emphasized the rights of peasants and workers to seek the transformation of traditional and oppressive social relations. However, the exercise of those rights was importantly conditioned on acceptance of the State as the sole legitimate arbiter of such relations. If the thrust of socialist education was thus to tie subordinate classes even more strongly to the State, this effort nevertheless had contradictory effects in local society, where the school actually served as an important site for popular empowerment.

Because the secundaria garnered very low enrollments until the 1930s and 40s, it is appropriate that we begin here to situate its development. Though the public secundaria was officially created by law in 1915, it was not until 1923, shortly after the first rural primarias were put into action, that the secundaria received serious attention. At that time Bernardo Gastélum, Subsecretary of Education, proposed a reorganization of college preparatory studies by clearly distinguishing a phase of secondary education as an extension of the primary school. In this manner, the secundaria would still retain the division of subject matter and specialization characteristic of preparatory studies, but

would now continue the "basic" cultural and ideological functions of the primaria. Mabry (1985:222) has noted that the idea of the secundaria was borrowed from the United States, and thus fiercely resisted by traditionalists who wished to preserve a strict separation between primary and advanced education, and who feared the incursion of "foreign" educational philosophies.[18] If this might have been the original motivation behind the decree of 1915, by 1923 the key components envisioned in the new plan for secondary education responded to the uniquely Mexican postrevolutionary ethos. The four central goals of the new secundaria were to:

> 1) carry forth the task of correcting defects and sponsoring the general development of students begun in the primaria, 2) strengthen in each student the sense of solidarity with others, 3) create habits of unity (*cohesión*) and social cooperation, and 4) offer all students a great variety of activities, exercises, and teachings so that each one might discover a vocation and be able to dedicate him/herself to cultivating it (Meneses 1986:408).

Clearly, the secundaria's goals of "correcting defects" and fostering solidarity and cooperation were consonant with the revolutionary ideology of rural primary schooling as well.

Unlike the primaria, however, the secundaria was still oriented toward urban, and mostly professional, classes.[19] Moreover, the secundaria continued to be administered by the National University as part of its preparatories until a presidential decreee in 1925, after which Moises Sáenz created a separate Office of Secondary Education in 1928. It was then that the secundaria became more explicitly guided by methods and principles appropriate to the emerging conception of a specifically "adolescent" life stage (Meneses 1986:603). Too, the secundaria began to offer a more varied curriculum (especially in the technical or industrial "shops" [talleres] students would choose), thus providing the bases for different possible avenues of future work or study. The goal of the secundaria was to balance the desire for a curriculum more specialized than the primaria, which would offer students the chance to explore their vocational options in the emerging technical division of labor, with the themes of integration and national unity. The goal, in other words, was to accommodate the "individual differences" of the students while still subordinating individual interests to the imperatives of "solidarity," "cooperation," and "social values"

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[18] Kamens et al. (1996) emphasize the impact of "worldwide ideological currents," with their conceptions of progress and "societal rationalization," on secondary curricula around the globe. As they put it, "few countries possess local educational traditions sufficiently entrenched to resist the highly professionalized world-level discourse concerning curricular structure and content" (118). Yet the case here argues for a more nuanced conception of curricular integration. That Mexico adopted its model for secondary education from these "ideological currents" does not imply that important local meanings and uses failed to place their particular imprint on the course of its development.

[19] By 1928, there were still only seven federal secundarias in the whole country, all of them concentrated in Mexico City. In addition, there were some thirty-two secundarias operated by the states, and another thirty-six private secundarias throughout the national territory (Meneses 1986:484).

(Meneses 1986:486).[20] Sáenz reaffirmed the State's commitment to unity and equality by suggesting the secundaria would continue to oblige Mexicans to "take the same educational path," even as it provided the opportunity for distinction and differentiation (Meneses 1986:480). This early period of the secundaria thus established a pedagogical rationale which could still be observed in 1990 at Escuela Secundaria Federal.

At the outset of the 1930s, the development of the secundaria took a distinct turn. Increasingly, secundarias were established to prepare workers and rural teachers. Students were drawn from the working classes, and even occasionally the peasantry, rather than exclusively from the urban-based middle and upper classes. The architect of this emerging emphasis on technical education was Education Secretary Narciso Bassols. Partly because of the onset of world recession in 1929, Bassols wished to counter the intellectual, moral and spiritual thrust of Vasconcelos' policies with a more practical approach to national industrialization (Ornelas 1984:40). Integrating the already existing normal schools, agricultural centers, and cultural missions into unitary "regional peasant schools," Bassols hoped to emphasize the teaching of better production methods for the satisfaction of local needs. Considering himself a "Marxist," Bassols nonetheless developed a workers' education which in practice would dovetail with capitalists' desire for cheap skilled labor.

It was in Bassols' discourse that peasants and workers were encouraged to identify themselves, first and foremost, as Mexicans, and to identify the State as the supreme representative of the nation. The State, in Bassols' view, was above the conflict of social classes, which was inherent to society. The goal of the state should be to represent the true interests of the nation. To this end, it had to achieve a certain "uniformity" of all Mexicans. However, this kind of "national integration" could be more easily achieved through straightforward steps toward economic development than through any specifically cultural action of the schools (Ornelas 1984:44-5; 1995:111). It is only if we appreciate the important *continuities* in postrevolutionary educational thought that we can understand how the apparently radical rupture of "socialist education" could be reconciled with the homogenizing thrust of state action. In this way Bassols could support the teaching of technical skills, the endorsement of class struggle, and the achievement of social mobility for workers, even as he continued to encourage a view of the State as located above class conflict in society,

It was during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) that secondary enrollments began to grow significantly (61% for the period; Muñoz Izquierdo 1981:112). Now with an avowedly "socialist" educational program, children of workers were encouraged to enter the system in a kind of "affirmative action," and the discourse on solidarity received new impetus. While the secundaria turned more "technical," and the curriculum included more hours devoted to practical, productive activities, socialist pedagogical philosophy sketched the desired qualities of the new secundaria graduate: "a young person with a firm concept of responsibility to and solidarity with laboring classes and an intimate conviction of social justice, so that, upon completing his/her studies,

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[20] In 1932, when a full Department of Secondary Education was finally created under the secretaryship of Narciso Bassols, these pedagogical goals were given an even firmer institutional grounding (Meneses 1986:602).

he/she will be oriented toward community service and not the desire for private gain" (Meneses 1988:113; based on the writings of Juan B. Salazar, Cárdenas' head of secondary education).[21] Also at this time, the teaching of history and civics were given new emphasis. In history, students learned about class conflict and imperialism as a way of understanding Mexican history. They participated in student government and mutual aid societies to practice cooperative social work. Finally, students made frequent trips to shops and factories in order to gain a fuller appreciation of working-class life (Meneses 1988:116).

While Cárdenas' experiment with socialist education seemed a novel, progressive twist on postrevolutionary educational ideology, in fact it represented a more effective means of state domination (Brachet-Marquez 1994). The identification of students with working-class and peasant interests served the goal of corporatist state-formation Cárdenas was pursuing at the time. As long as the State was always conceived as the genuine repository of the collective good, the formation of collective identifications among students was thought to augment state power. Yet, as I show elsewhere (Levinson 1993), the resources devoted to a truly social education may bring contradictory effects, enabling students to create collective indentifications which might not respond to the logic of the State.

By 1940, Cárdenas' attempt at a populist engineering of the social state ran into the contradictions and constraints which had always marked it (Córdova 1984; Hamilton 1982), and the reins of power swung over to the more conservative Avila Camacho. It didn't take long for the Avila Camacho administration to begin dismantling or reversing the "socialist" experiments of the Cárdenas period, chief amongst them the curricula for primary and secondary schools. Under Avila Camacho, the third constitutional article was once again amended, this time deleting all references to socialism which had been inserted during the Cardenista period (The actual constitutional reform did not go into effect until 1946, as Avila Camacho was leaving office). Official educational discourse reinstated the primary importance of national unity and reconciliation above class struggle, and the plans for secondary education emphasized the preparation for democracy, productive work, and a harmonious civic life. In reality, the predominant emphasis on national unity and industrial progress which emerged under Avila Camacho encouraged educational practice to fruitfully incorporate themes from all the previous postrevolutionary periods. Themes of national integration and moral redemption from the immediate postrevolutionary epoch combined with a valorization of practical skills for a more productive life. However, educational discourse and practice also began to return even more to its liberal roots, emphasizing democratization, equality of opportunities, and social mobility. As Loaeza (1984:104-5) points out, this emphasis allowed the State to legitimize itself both by providing increased channels for social

[21] Córdova (1989:159-61) emphasizes that for Cárdenas socialist education meant, above all, emphasizing social responsibility over individual advancement. Cárdenas linked this social emphasis to a collective unity in nationhood.

mobility (whether real or merely perceived) and by propagating nationalist values identified with the State.[22]

To be sure, secondary education began to expand under Avila Camacho at an even greater rate than under Cárdenas. Despite the fact that Cárdenas had sought to conceptualize the secundaria as an agent of social transformation and enfranchisement, and despite the claims that the secundaria began to grow after 1940 as a response mainly to urban middle-class aspirations (Muñoz Izquierdo 1981:112), in fact the secundaria continued to provide an important means of social mobility for members of working and peasant classes. What changed mostly was the rhetoric and dominant logic which framed such mobility. Before 1940, workers and peasants were encouraged to utilize the school as a tool for class empowerment and enfranchisement. As long as the energy of these historically subordinated classes was channeled through state-run institutions, such as schools, their political and economic aspirations were sanctioned. The school, then, conformed to the corporatist logic of state-building Cárdenas employed through an array of state institutions. After Cárdenas, however, the State entered into a period of more comfortable alliance with national and transnational capital. The State continued to sponsor mobility through education, but only as long as such mobility contributed to the transcendent goals of national unity and development. In the official discourse of this period, the interests of nation, of subordinated class, and of capital were considered convergent; each could win in the hegemonic formula for national development and the stabilization of a "revolutionary" regime.

This formula has provided the basic continuity in policy and practice around the secundaria at least until 1980.[23] Many would argue, like Ornelas, that this continuity stretched up to the new set of constitutional reforms enacted in 1992, among which was the decree to make secondary education obligatory. In the period from 1950 to 1970, there was a 1000% increase in secundaria enrollments (Barkin 1975:186), and growth continued throughout the 1980s as well (Enrollments appeared to be dropping off toward the end of the 1980s). Even current educational discourse recognizes that until the mid 1970s, the State was primarily concerned with the quantitative expansion of education to cover demand.[24] Under some version of the rallying cry, "*Educación Para Todos*," the

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[22] Ornelas (1995) also shows how the "political philosophy" of the Mexican educational system, always rooted in liberal discourses of individual rights, anti-clericalism, and rational progress, endured even throughout the socialist interregnum of 1934-1946.

[23] Though many point to the "populist" reforms and rhetoric of the Echeverría administration (1970-76) as a significant departure from this pattern, I prefer to see them as an intensification of previous developments. The attempt to rearticulate state hegemony after the political rupture of 1968 involved the reactivation of populist rhetoric from the Cárdenas period, but did not fundamentally alter educational structures. If important changes were made at the level of preparatory and university education, similar changes were not as salient in basic education. Fuentes (1978) notes the emphasis given to "technical" education during this time, but he also suggests that this policy was really just a continuation of trends initiated in the two previous administrations, and traceable ultimately to Narciso Bassols and the vocational themes of Cardenista educational thought.

[24] The federal educational reform of 1973, under Echeverría, provided the conceptual basis for a thorough overhaul of schooling, though many of its details were never fully implemented. This law, moreover, reiterated that state education had four "functions" in society: academic, socialization, economic, and distributive (Gallo 1987:56). It was this law which spawned the "Chetumal Reforms" of 1974, a specific reorganization of the secundaria curriculum. After 1974, most secundarias began to teach integrated

State further sought to fulfill popular claims for equality, participation, and social justice through schooling.[25] In the early 1960s, the first federal secundarias técnicas were built. When a new secundaria was built in a large rural community or small provincial city, it was likely to be a técnica rather than a "general" secundaria. The técnica was said to offer its graduates more appropriate skills for immediately entering regional labor forces, or for continuing on to more advanced vocational studies. General secundarias, on the other hand, tended to be built only in the larger cities (Reyes 1986:57). In this fashion, the State could fulfill its obligation to the popular demand for schooling while attempting to redirect students from the more desirable track of liberal university studies toward the vocational track.[26] Not only did this strategy promise to match more students with more potential jobs, it also assuaged those in the national bourgeoisie who were desperate for more qualified technical labor.[27] Ironically, the strategy was less successful than hoped. The symbolic and status value of university professional studies still discouraged many students from pursuing the route of technical studies.

With the onset of economic crisis in 1982, secondary enrollments began to level off. A curious disjuncture between educational expectations and family practice seems to have developed. The secundaria, the intermediate stage on the path to full professional studies, had finally come to form an integral part of the livelihood strategies of most families and communities. Indeed, the expectation of secondary attendance as an adolescent rite of passage had become woven into the local cultural fabric in all but the poorest and most remote communities. Yet around this same time the possibility of full professional employment became increasingly unattainable for the majority of university graduates. Word on the street had it that an entrepeneurial taco vendor with little education could make more money than engineers or doctors with university degrees. The latter, after all, had few opportunities to exercise their careers. The symbolic significance of secondary schooling as a sign of having "culture" (Levinson 1996) thus entered into contradiction with economic realities, and this contradiction appears to have generated a great deal of ambivalence about continued secondary attendance. It was in this atmosphere of popular ambivalence that the curricular reforms and constitutional amendment of 1993 were announced.

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subject areas, called "*areas*" (Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Spanish, etc.), rather than the older system of individual subjects, called "*asignaturas*."

[25] Not until the late 1970s did education officials turn their attention seriously to the problem of "quality" in basic education; the premise of such a shift was that quality had always been secondary to the goal of providing the bare minimum of schooling--and the promise of certification and mobility it would bring--to as many people as possible.

[26] Fuentes (1978) argues that from 1970-1976 (the regime of Luís Echeverría) the State, in addition to seeking expansion of enrollments and the modernization of the curriculum, wished to give secondary schooling a firm vocational grounding in order to divert more students away from professional studies at higher educational levels.

[27] In the late 1970s, the State also pursued this strategy at the level of "*educación medio superior*," which follows the secundaria. A system of terminal vocational high schools, called CONALEP (*Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica*), was instituted throughout the country. Similarly, vocational and liberal curricula were integrated in the CBTIS or CBTA (*Colegio de Bachillerato Tecnológico Industrial y de Servicios*, or *Agropecuaria*), a nationwide system of high schools which gave students the option of taking a terminal vocational degree or continuing on to higher education.

Curricular Reform in 1993: A Brief Thematic Analysis

By 1994, all secondary schools throughout the Mexican Republic were to have implemented the new curriculum drafted as part of the Program for Educational Modernization. This curriculum, along with an official statement of justification and support, was published in book form in 1993 and widely distributed by the Secretariat of Public Education. While it is always a difficult matter to correlate official documents with the complex intentionalities that constitute an educational reform, this document contains the most visible and well-articulated statement about the new program for secondary education. The analysis that follows constitutes an exposition and critical interrogation of this document. I will then conclude the paper by returning to some of my ethnographic and historical observations and suggesting some possible consequences of the reform.

The new plan for secondary education appears to reflect the "contradiction" between forming citizens and forming workers Ornelas and others have noted.[28] On the one hand, it is a remarkably progressive document. The plan lays out the responsibility of the federal government to "undertake an important effort in order to make secondary education accessible to all" (9; see also 12-13). It mentions equal distribution of wealth, advanced democracy, tolerance and security in social life, and a responsible relationship to the environment among its eventual goals (9-10). And it establishes that a principal aim of the secundaria should be to stimulate "an active and reflexive participation in the social organizations and in the political and cultural life of the nation" (12).

Yet before these goals can be articulated, the document grounds the rationale for educational reform in the "deep process of change and modernization" which continues to affect the country. This modernization appears to mean, above all, that "economic activities and work processes are evolving toward higher levels of productivity and more flexible forms of organization which are indispensable in an integrated and highly competitive world economy" (9). And the document also exhorts the population to uphold its own commitment to higher educational achievement for the good of the nation. Only with a more extended period of basic education will the new generations be able to "incorporate themselves responsibly into adult life and productive work" (10). Each time the general goals of secondary education are mentioned, the goal of "flexible and productive incorporation into the world of work" (12) appears to have pride of place.

After confirming the "basic character" of the knowledge imparted in both primary and secondary school (language, math, sciences, geography and history), the new plan goes on to assert the need for a more coherent articulation between primary and secondary levels. This need justifies the most salient topical aspect of the new plan: the

[28] In 1990, at ESF, one could still observe a tension between these goals, played out in the varying emphases on secondary education as "basic" (*integral, formativa*) or "preparatory" to professional studies. While most teachers suggested there was in fact no contradiction, it was clear that many aspects of pedagogy and "discipline" were specifically directed at students who would be continuing their schooling--in effect, leaving those who would be terminating their schooling in a kind of organizational limbo.

return to teaching by individual "subject" (*asignatura*) rather than "*área*". The earlier reforms of 1974 had encouraged secundarias to adopt a more integrated subject curriculum, in which biology, chemistry, and physics would be taught conjointly in 7 weekly hours of "natural sciences," and history, geography, and social studies would be taught conjointly in 7 weekly hours of "social sciences." Most secundarias outside Mexico City and some of the other major urban centers appear to have adopted this curriculum of "*áreas*," while Mexico City schools largely continued to teach the older *asignaturas*. The new plan suggests that teaching by "*áreas*" failed to contribute to a solid and well-ordered "disciplinary formation" of students (11), and mandates a return to *asignaturas*. Biology, chemistry, and physics receive a roughly equal treatment across the three years of secondary studies, while the former social science "area" has been disaggregated into courses of history (world and Mexican) across all three years, and courses of geography (world and Mexican) and civics across the first two years.

Among the notable changes to the curriculum are the formal introduction of two new courses during the third and final year of studies: a course in "educational orientation," meant as an extended form of vocational counseling, and a final elective course to be determined by each school according to its own needs, specialties, and interests. In contrast to the detailed and elaborate curricular guidelines provided for all other "academic subjects," what really stands out about these two newly proposed courses is the complete absence of any concrete guidelines in the published study program under review here. One is left to wonder about how these courses will in fact be developed at local schools. When I returned to ESF for a brief visit in 1995, the course on "educational orientation" appeared to be cobbled together in an ad hoc fashion from the same kinds of surveys and skills inventories that had been applied occasionally by the school's "vocational" specialist in 1991. Thus, a course which appears to have the intent of accomplishing a more rational integration of labor force and market is foundering for lack of resources and preparation. The elective courses, on the other hand, appeared to be quite popular with students. In 1995, students could choose between courses in ecology, photography, and the local indigenous language.

Finally, alongside all of the academic subjects, the new study program continues to allot the same number of hours to the so-called "development activities." This was one aspect of the curriculum that remained virtually unchanged. Across all three years, students are to take two weekly hours of "artistic expression and appreciation," two weekly hours of physical education, and three weekly hours of "technological education." As the new program explains, "The definition of these as activities and not as academic subjects is not meant to imply that they play a lesser role in the student's formation; rather, it is meant to highlight the importance of carrying them out with greater flexibility, without being subject to a rigid and uniform program, and with a higher possibility of adaptation to the needs, resources, and interests of the regions, schools, teachers, and students" (14).

Reading through the introductory section of the program, I was struck by the absence of any reference to the needs or interests of Mexican "adolescents." Where was the historical link to this globalized conception of the transition to adulthood? Had the concept of adolescence been effectively erased from official discourse about secondary education? In reviewing the major part of the document, the proposed contents of the

academic subjects, I took special interest in the newly proposed course in "civics" (*civismo*). It was here, I thought, that I might find some reference to the process of identity formation in adolescence. Certainly, I thought, this was where I would find an affirmation of the priority of the nation as a frame of reference for students' effort and conduct. This was where I would observe the triumph of revolutionary nationalism over the narrower provisions of liberal individualism.

There is still no reference to adolescence, but there is indeed a rich reflection of the importance of solidarity in national life. The goal of civics is articulated in terms of "supporting the continuity of [the student's] formation and his/her insertion into the activities of the collectivity and productive life" (121). This collective socialization should not proceed through merely "declarative" statements; the transmission of such values will only become effective if they "correspond to the kinds of relationships and practices which characterize the activity of the school and the school group" (122).[29] Thus, the section on civics appears to endorse the most progressive values and styles of pedagogical reinforcement. In addition to a continued emphasis on patriotism and the strengthening of national identity, there is a large place given to themes of human rights and substantive democracy. Teachers are encouraged to undertake an analysis of such themes, as well as concepts of "human dignity, liberty, justice, equality, solidarity, tolerance, and truth," which are said to be central to the formation of national values (123). And such concepts should not remain on an abstract plane. Teachers should find ways to link "real referents" to such concepts, bringing up everyday problems and issues and fomenting analysis through "participatory methods such as roundtables and debates" (122).

Conclusions

In this paper, I have attempted to bring together ethnographic, historical, and textual modes of analysis to illuminate the relations, past and present, between concepts of adolescence and programs of secondary education in Mexico (This has been a necessarily tentative exercise, as the secondary and official historical sources I have consulted only permit a rather limited view of the kinds of popular discourses of adolescence and solidarity which really existed in prior epochs.) . I began with a brief account of the strong presence of discourses on "adolescence" at one provincial city and secondary school in 1991. Then I moved on to an historical and ideological analysis, situating the development of the Mexican secundaria in the postrevolutionary ethos of the 1920s and 30s. I suggested that this educational development incorporated contradictory themes from the ideological underpinnings of Mexican institutions, including hierarchical holism, liberal individualism, and revolutionary nationalism. The secundaria was

[29] Most secundarias form students into cohorts, called *grupos escolares*, which attend virtually every class and activitiy together, and which remain an organizational unit for all three years of the students' tenure in the school. This statement is especially significant in light of my discovery of the importance of the "*grupo escolar*" as an intense focus of socialization at ESF. In fact, I argue that teachers at ESF discursively construct the *grupo escolar* as a microcosm of the nation, where students must learn to overcome their differences and work together for the collective good (Levinson 1993a, 1993b, 1996, n.d.).

inspired by a U.S. model of "adolescent" education in the liberal mold, but its practical course of development, subject to the ideological swings of postrevolutionary regimes, incorporated numerous influences. Designed early on to accomplish the "integral" formation of the adolescent for community life, by the 1980s the secundaria had become an important stepping-stone in the path to professional studies for nearly half of all Mexican students. This growing role then met the challenges of economic crisis, which began in the early 1980s. Finally, I undertook a brief thematic analysis of the introductory statements and curricular outline provided with the new plan for secondary education in 1993.

Given the themes and initiatives highlighted in the latest plan for secondary studies, on balance it would seem there has been a subtle shift toward a more liberal modernist emphasis on the child's movement toward autonomy, individual rights, and freedom of choice in pursuing career options. This shift accompanies a notable commitment to open discussion of issues about human rights and democracy, and a renewed attention to the solid formation of technically skilled workers. In effect, there appears to have been an erosion of the ethos of revolutionary nationalism, with its collectivist prescriptions for adolescent "development." Though this ethos is still clearly observable, especially in the program for civic studies, it now takes a back seat to the imperative of individual development. The introduction of "elective" and "orientation" courses suggests a further emphasis on the individual. Interestingly, the prominence of themes of democracy and human rights implies a tacit admission that such principles have not always been adequately respected in Mexico, perhaps even less so in recent years. There is an assumption, too, that the prior emphasis on collective life allowed violations of democracy and individual human rights to be rationalized in terms of the need for a strong state and a common good.

What does the new compulsory rule and the new secondary curriculum augur for Mexican students, their families and communities? I would recall for the reader, here, that Mexicans across social classes tend to conceive of adulthood more in terms of achieving a sense of social responsibility, of enduring commitment to a functioning social unit. That is why the relational sense of identity and group solidarity encouraged in the secundaria appears to find strong support in prior modes of family and community socialization. One sees little of the intense North American cultural drive for individuation during the period of adolescence. On the contrary, Mexicans often describe adolescence as a time when youth may suddenly go "astray," and the predominant emphasis is on further social integration. Mexican households across social classes, moreover, also tend to function as collective social units (Selby et al. 1990; Lomnitz and Perez-Lisaur 1987; Martin 1990).[30] Even before the current period of economic crisis, children would envision the transition into adulthood, and the pursuit of formal studies, largely in terms of contributing to the household and comforting the parents (usually the mother).

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[30] One must still be careful, when characterizing households as solidary units of production and consumption, not to overlook the perennial conflicts of interest constituted by gender and age (Benería and Roldan 1987).

As the crisis has intensified, there is some evidence that urban households have shored up their resources and sought more immediate opportunities for employment and gain. The levelling off of secondary enrollments (even a decline in some regions) suggests that families are having a harder time sustaining their older children in school. Perhaps it also suggests a devaluation of the secundaria. It is ironic that the Mexican State should choose this time to attempt an expansion of the secundaria and a constitutional mandate to make secondary schooling compulsory. While it is true that most employers in urban labor markets now require their workers to have a secondary graduation certificate (Calvo 1996), it is also true that the "informal economy" continues to offer a more viable and immediate source of income to many Mexican youth. Unless the State can generate more investment income and commit enough resources to make secondary education a realistic option for families and their children, the system will continue to experience a crisis of enrollment. Moreover, with its increased emphasis on individual options over social commitment, the new secondary curriculum may help drive a cultural wedge between families and their surrounding communities. As some encourage their children to pursue the holy grail of technical employment or professional studies, many others will only be able to look on in envy or indifference. The price society may pay will be increased antagonism and increased cynicism about the State's ability to provide for the common good.

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